



SOMALILAND IS READY TO VOTE

“Somaliland government funded the Majority of the Election Process, also the UK, EU and Sweden financially and technically supported the Election Process”

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Hargeisa, Somaliland

BY:

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The Election Monitoring Office of CPA was launched in January 2017, to closely monitor and follow up the election related activities happening in Somaliland and to provide briefing papers, advocacy, recommendations, and to educate the public. The Office produces a series of reports about the challenges of Elections, timelines, updates about the Election Laws, etc.

Introduction

After ten years of election delays, finally the people of Somaliland are now expecting to elect their representatives of the Parliament. For the coming weeks, the Political Parties are finalizing the lists of the candidates of the House of Representatives and the Local Councils. Also, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) is expected to conduct reissuing of voter cards to those whom lost theirs, Polling Station Change¹, the voter card distribution and announcing the lists of registered voters.

The Low-income candidates including women, youth, and minority groups, are complaining about the high charges of the registration fees. The Articles of 68 & 83 of the newly approved combined Election Law² requires the candidates of the House of Representatives a registration fee of 40,000,000 Somaliland Shilling (Nearly \$4,700), and the candidates of the Local Councils to pay starting from 4,000,000 to 15,000,000 Somaliland Shilling (from \$470 to \$1,760) based on the category of their Electoral District³.

747 candidates from the political parties are running the local councils of the 23 Electoral Districts while 246 candidates from the six regions are running the Parliament. The ministry of finance is supposed to collect the registration fees. The Election Monitoring Office estimated the total amount of the fees expected from the 993 candidates are between \$1.8 to \$1.93⁴ Million dollars. According to the national budget of 2019, 2020 and 2021⁵, the government allocated the elections nearly 28.8 Billion Somaliland Shilling each year.⁶

The President of Somaliland and his Interior Minister stated that the government fully funded the Voter Registration Process. The Election Monitoring Office commended the president's commitment of taking the lead to hold the Elections on time and solving most of the challenges, in collaboration with the Opposition Parties. Even the government officials claimed that they fully funded the election process, but there are other facts showing that the International Partners also financially supported. The National Electoral Commission of Somaliland confirmed that the International Partners financially and technically supported the Electoral Process. The Election Monitoring Office noted that the UK alone contributed more than \$2.6 Million to the Somaliland Electoral Process, while other donors including the EU and Sweden financially and technically funded the Election Process.

¹ For those who need to change their Electoral District, from one district to another.

² Law No. 91/2020

³ Somaliland has 23 Electoral Districts with different categories, 7 Districts are Category A including Hargeisa, Burco, Gebilay, Borama, Berbera, Laascaanood and Erigabo, 5 Districts of Category B including Saylac, Oodweyne, Buuhoodle, Badhan and Ceel-afweyn and 11 Districts with category C. The registration fees of the 7 districts of category A is 15,000,000 Somaliland Shilling. The Registration Fee of the 5 Districts of Category B is 7,000,000 Somaliland Shilling, and the 11 Districts of Category C is 4,000,000 Somaliland Shilling

⁴ Based on the current exchange rate of Somaliland shilling (\$1=8500 Somaliland Shilling)

⁵ <http://slmof.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/MoFD.BUDGET-FOR-2020.pdf>
<http://www.somalilandparliament.net/Test/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/The-original-budget-2019.pdf> <http://www.somalilandparliament.net/Test/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ODOROSKA-MIISAANIYADDA-UPDATE-2021.pdf>

⁶ Somaliland has to rates of exchange, the market rate which is (\$1=8500) and Bank Rate or Government Rate (\$1=7000), so, for the market rate the total of the election budget in three years will be \$10.1 Million, in the government rate it will be \$12.3 Million.

EMO is welcoming the President's speech, directing the governors to facilitate fair platform for the candidates during the Election Season, but the Election Monitoring Office is concerned about the resent detaining of two candidates from UCID Party in Hargeisa. EMO is condemning the arresting and detaining of the two candidates, it is a very concerning issue. We are calling the government authorities to release these candidates. This is the first test of the president's speech directing the government officials to prepare a fair and peaceful platform to the candidates.

Recent Election Activities

On January 24th, The Political Parties of Somaliland endorsed a special arrangement of supporting Gaboye clans to make sure their participation in the upcoming parliamentary and local council elections facilitated by a pressure group led by the Somaliland Independent Civil Society Coalition (ISCO). The Political Parties, particularly the Chairmen of UCID and Wadani, agreed that every political party to nominate one parliamentary candidate and one local council candidate in one region, to minimize the number of candidates contesting votes in a same constituency. The Civil Society and the international partners are advocating to make sure that the upcoming parliament and local councils to be more inclusive and both the Minority groups and women to secure their representation in the parliament and the local councils.⁷

On February 2nd, 2021, the House of Elders (Guurti) endorsed the Election timeline prepared by the National Electoral Commission, and Guurti revised⁸ the extension of the House of Representatives to hold the Elections this May 2021.⁹ On the next day, the President of Somaliland Muse Bihi Abdi issued a presidential decree officializing that Elections to happen on the 31st May, 2021. Those two steps were a milestone and paved the way to hold the long-awaited elections.¹⁰

On February 8th, During a consultative and election preparation meeting in the presidential House, addressing the governors and mayors of Somaliland, the president of Somaliland Muse Bihi Abdi declared a state of Election Season and the government will focus on, that the combined elections to happen peacefully, the President directed the Governors of the regions to take the lead of enforcing the Election Law and to prioritize that Elections to happen peacefully, while making sure that candidates to get fair platform to contest during the Election Campaign "Governors represent the central government in the regions. Make sure that elections are conducted in accordance with the National Electoral Commission regulations and directives," he told them.

The President called the Mayors who are running for a reelection not to use the public resources during their reelection campaign. The President reiterated that it is the first time that the Somaliland Government fully funded the Election process "It is the first time in our history that we have asked the world to stand aside. We are solely using our assets to finance the upcoming twinned elections without external support," he said.¹¹

⁷ Qorshaha Beelaha Gabooye Kaga Qaybgali Karaan Doorashada Wakiilada Oo Lagu Soo Bandhigay Hargaysa. SAAB TV. (2021, January 24), YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3u9N6eJKxA>

⁸ On November 2019 Guurti extended two years time, the term of the House of Representatives

⁹ Golaha Guurtida Somaliland oo Mudo Dhimis ku Sameeyaay Mudadii Golaha Wakiilada. Universal TV. (2021, February 2), YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGDG90hk5FE>

¹⁰ Madaxweynaha Somaliland oo Go'aamiyey Aminta Qabsoomida Doorashooyinka Golayaasha. BC24 TV. (2021, February 3). YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwC2_F7wDk

¹¹ Somaliland: President Bihi Reveals Government Was Bankrolling Twin Election Bill. (2021, February 8). Middle East North Africa Financial Network. <https://menafn.com/1101567786/Somaliland-President-Bihi-Reveals-Government-Was-Bankrolling-Twin-Election-Bill>

On February 8th, two candidates from the UCID Political Party were attested in Hargeisa. Both of the Opposition parties condemned the arrest of the two candidates.¹² The Chairman of UCID Party, Eng. Faysal Ali Warabe called the government to release these two candidates from his party. One of the candidates is a British-Somaliland citizen.¹³

On February 9th, the International Partners who support the Somaliland Democratization Process, welcomed the announcement that parliamentary and local council elections would happen on 31st May 2021. The International Partners commended “the National Electoral Commission and the three political parties for the successful completion of a transparent and inclusive voter registration between December 2020 and January 2021.” The International Partners stated that they “observed and welcomed the large numbers of young men and women across Somaliland registering to vote for the first time. It is the sustained transparency, independence and impartiality of these technical processes, and the institutions supporting them, which underpins the credibility of Somaliland’s democratic processes.” International Partners stated in their press statement.

The International Partners “commended the Somaliland government for its commitment to ensuring elections are delivered on time, and to providing the majority of the funding for these elections. The international community has provided financial support to the NEC for the voter registration phase (from EU, Sweden and UK), and we look forward to providing further financial and non-financial support for the remaining stages of the election process.” International Partners said in their statement.¹⁴

On February 10th, the National Electoral Commission welcomed the official announcement by the president that Somaliland’s local and parliamentary elections would take place on the 31st of May 2021, thereby reaffirming Somaliland’s longstanding commitment to the democratic processes and ideals espoused on Somaliland’s inception three decades ago. NEC expressed its debt of gratitude to the international partners, “... it should be noted that achievement of our democratic aims are facilitated through the support and cooperation of Somaliland’s three main political parties who have set aside any political differences in order to guarantee that these elections take place without interruption or postponement. It of course goes without saying that the NEC also wishes to express our appreciation towards the government of Somaliland that continues to provide the framework in which electoral candidates, voters, and media outlets can all operate freely, with no concerns around safety, security, or freedom of expression.” NEC said in their statement.

NEC underlined that the International Partners also financially and technically supported the

¹² Xisbiga Waddani Oo Xukumada Ku Dhaliilay Xadhiga Musharaxiin Hargaysa Lagu Xidhay. Horn Cable Tv. (2021, February 10), YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=318QOWy1zk>

¹³ Guddoomiye Faysal Cali Waraabe, Oo sheegay In Hargeysa Lagu xidhay laba Musharax Oo Ucid Ka Tirsan. Xisbiga UCID. (2021, February 9), YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XM91t34PL6E>

¹⁴ International partners welcome the announcement of the date for Somaliland’s parliamentary and local council elections. Editor. (2021, February 9), Horn Diplomat. <https://www.horndiplomat.com/2021/02/09/international-partners-welcome-the-announcement-of-the-date-for-somalilands-parliamentary-and-local-council-elections/>

Somaliland’s Electoral Process “... In tandem with technological support, financial and technical assistance on the ground have both been generously provided by the international community and this is evidenced most recently by way of the basket fund by the EU, Sweden and the UK. Some of those funds have already been used for the recent and ongoing voter registration process, there is also additional financial support in the pipeline from the international community. In addition, we cite previous examples of support extended to the NEC by the UK through the provision of voter registration and iris scan software licensing was a key element of the digitization process that will safeguard election integrity. Such examples thereby underpin the international community’s long standing support and commitment to coordinated efforts towards democratization in Somaliland.” NEC mentioned in their statement.¹⁵

¹⁵ Statement by the Somaliland National Electoral Commission (NEC) on Somaliland’s forthcoming Parliamentary and Local Council Elections in May 2021. (2021, February 10). Somaliland Chronicle. <https://somalilandchronicle.com/2021/02/10/statement-by-the-somaliland-national-electoral-commission-nec-on-somalilands-forthcoming-parliamentary-and-local-council-elections-in-may-2021/>